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November 4, 1996

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Federal Communications Commission
Office of Secretary

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Mr. William F. Caton
Acting Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Grandfathered Short-Spaced FM Stations
(MM Docket No. 96-120, RM-7651)

Dear Mr. Caton:

Submitted herewith for filing, on behalf of our client, Compass Radio of San Diego, Inc., licensee of Radio Station KXST(FM), Oceanside, California, are an original and nine (9) copies of its Reply Comments in the above-referenced rulemaking proceeding.

Please direct any inquiries concerning this submission to the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

KAYE, SCHOLER, FIERMAN, HAYS &
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By:


James M. Weitzman

Enclosures

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In the Matter of)	
)	
Grandfathered Short-Spaced FM)	MM Docket No. 96-120
Stations)	RM-7651

therein, there is presently pending before the Commission an application (File No. BPH-910612ID) for a construction permit for a minor modification of the technical facilities of Radio Station KXST(FM).

In its Comments in this proceeding, Compass demonstrated that liberalization of Section 73.213 of the Commission's Rules with respect to grandfathered short-spaced second and third adjacent channel stations, as proposed by the Commission under "Proposal 2" in Paragraphs 17-26 of its NPRM in this proceeding, would serve the public interest. Under "Proposal 2", the Commission proposes to eliminate both the second adjacent channel and third adjacent channel spacing requirements for grandfathered short-spaced stations in connection with applications to modify the technical facilities of this very limited category of pre-1964 grandfathered short-spaced stations. Under "Option 2" for the Commission's "Proposal 2" any second adjacent channel or third adjacent channel grandfathered short-spaced station whose transmitter site is not presently inside the protected service contour of the short-spaced station would not be permitted to relocate to a transmitter site which is inside the protected service contour of the short-spaced station. However, any second adjacent channel or third adjacent channel grandfathered short-spaced station whose transmitter site is already located within the protected service contour of the protected short-spaced station would be permitted to change transmitter site to any location with respect to that short-spaced station, and the station proposing to be modified could receive interference in an area that was not already being served by that station.

Compass demonstrated in its Comments herein that, in light of the ever-quickenning pace of consolidation in the radio broadcasting industry and the advent of digital television broadcasting (“DTV”), it is a matter of sheer survival for radio licensees to be able to maximize technical facilities of their stations. Viewed from this analytical perspective, Compass demonstrated that adoption by the Commission of either of its two alternative approaches to Proposal 2 in its NPRM would assist broadcasters in maintaining competitive viability by providing licensees of grandfathered short-spaced stations seeking to improve facilities on second and third adjacent channel with the potential of improving or relocating their technical facilities, in order to better reach and serve their intended audiences. This is a potential which is presently denied to such licensees under the 1987 revisions to Section 73.213(a) of the Commission’s Rules.³ Compass also showed that the coming crisis in tower site availability created by the need of TV broadcasters for second antennas on their towers makes absolutely vital obtaining relocation flexibility for heretofore frozen short-spaced stations.

Compass demonstrated in its Comments that liberalization of Section 73.213(a) for second and third adjacent channel grandfathered short-spaced stations, either by adoption of the proposals set forth in Paragraph 25 of the Commission’s NPRM (i.e., elimination of consideration of second and third adjacent channel grandfathered short-spacings in connection

³ In 1987, Section 73.213 of the Commission’s Rules was amended by replacing the Table in Section 73.213(a) and the entire text of the rule section with a single paragraph that essentially provides that a grandfathered short-spaced station may have its technical facilities modified or relocated provided that the 1 mV/m field strength contour of that station is not extended toward the 1 mV/m field strength contour of any other short-spaced station. Second Report and Order in MM Docket No. 86-144, 2 FCC Rcd 5693, 5696 (1987). See also Compass Comments at 11-14.

with modification applications) or by adoption of the two-tiered analysis set forth in Paragraph 26 of the Commission's NPRM, would foster a stronger and more competitive radio broadcasting industry, thereby fostering diversity of views and, in turn, thereby serving the public interest, by facilitating the ability by the licensees of second or third adjacent channel grandfathered short-spaced FM stations to respond in an appropriate and flexible fashion to changes in their audience or to other changes in their business environment. Furthermore, Compass demonstrated that adoption by the Commission of the "Option 1" proposal set forth in Paragraph 25 of its NPRM (i.e., a return to the pre-1987 rule of not considering grandfathered short-spaced second and third adjacent channel stations in processing facilities improvement applications for such stations) would yield the greatest degree of savings of Commission resources in processing such applications. For these reasons, Compass endorsed adoption by the Commission of the proposal set forth in Paragraph 25 of its NPRM but noted that, in the unlikely event that the Commission were disinclined to adopt that proposal, Compass urged the Commission to adopt, as an alternative, the proposal set forth in Paragraph 26 of its NPRM with respect to grandfathered short-spaced second and third adjacent FM stations.

Significantly, Compass demonstrated in its Comments that adoption by the Commission of its proposals to liberalize Section 73.213 of the Rules for grandfathered short-spaced second and third adjacent channel stations will not result in increased interference to such stations. In this regard, Compass' Comments presented empirical data demonstrating that second and third adjacent channel FM stations have operated in very close proximity to one another (transmitter site to transmitter site) without any evidence of any interference being caused by one station to

another. See Compass Comments at 31-37. These empirical data fully supported the Commission's reasons, in its NPRM that:

“A limited number of grandfathered stations existed between 1964 and 1987 with complete flexibility on second adjacent channel and third adjacent channel shortspaced and we did not receive complaints of second-adjacent-channel or third-adjacent-channel interference during that time. Thus, historically the absence of restrictions did not result in interference complaints [Emphasis added.]”

NPRM at ¶24, 11 FCC Rcd at 7254.

In sum, all available evidence demonstrates clearly that no interference is caused by short-spaced second and third adjacent channel stations to other such stations. Indeed, Compass demonstrated in its Comments that the closer that two such stations move their respective transmitter sites toward one another, the less the stations experience any interference from one another.

Under these circumstances, Compass demonstrated that there is simply no rational basis whatsoever for the Commission to continue to adhere to the inflexible regulatory regime established under the present version of Section 73.213 of the Rules with respect to grandfathered second and third adjacent channel stations.

Finally, Compass supported the Commission's proposal in Paragraph 30 of its NPRM to eliminate the need for grandfathered short-spaced stations to obtain an agreement from other grandfathered short-spaced stations as a condition precedent to grant of a modification application.

II. Comments Of Other Parties To This Proceeding

Numerous parties filed Comments in response to the Commission's NPRM.

Significantly, except for the Comments of two parties, all of the Comments submitted in this proceeding fully supported the Commission's proposal to eliminate consideration of second and third adjacent channel grandfathered short-spacings in the context of facilities modification applications of such grandfathered short-spaced stations. These commenting parties provided significant additional bases to support the Commission's proposed liberalization of Section 73.213 of the Commission's Rules for grandfathered short-spaced stations.

A. Negative Impact of Advanced Television

Most significant among these considerations is the impact of the development of advanced television ("ATV") on grandfathered short-spaced second and third adjacent channel stations.⁴ See NAB Reply Comments at 10. In its Sixth Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making in MM Docket No. 87-268, ___ FCC Rcd ___, FCC 96-317 (released August 14, 1996) in Advanced Television Systems And Their Impact Upon The Existing Television Broadcast Service, the Commission proposed policies for developing the initial allotments for digital television ("DTV"), procedures for assigning DTV frequencies, and plans for spectrum recovery. In its Fourth Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making and Third Notice of Inquiry in MM Docket No. 87-268, 10 FCC Rcd 10541 (1995), the Commission stated that the temporary grant of an additional 6 MHz channel for DTV broadcasting to existing broadcast licensees would be conditioned explicitly on, among other things, return of one of the channels at the end of a

⁴ This consideration was raised in the Comments of Mullaney Engineering, Inc., at 5-6.

transition period. This spectrum recovery concept was further endorsed in the Commission's Sixth Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making in MM Docket NO. 87-268, *supra*. Furthermore, in its Sixth Further Notice of Proposed Rule Making in MM Docket No. 87-268, the Commission reaffirmed that it intended to allot DTV channels based on the locations of the transmitter sites of existing NTSC stations. *Id.*, at ¶56.

In short, during the transition period to full implementation of DTV, television licensees will be operating DTV facilities from the antenna sites at which they presently operate their existing NTSC television transmitting facilities. Thus, to effectuate the transition to DTV, television licensees will necessarily be installing additional transmission line and transmitting antenna elements (in many cases with multiple antenna bays) on their existing NTSC transmitting antenna towers.

However, as the Commission is well aware, a significant number of existing FM radio stations have their transmitting antennas located atop towers which serve as transmitter/antenna sites for existing television stations. In many of these cases, the towers in question serve as transmitter sites for multiple television stations. The need to install additional DTV transmission line and antenna facilities atop these towers coupled with the limited capability of many of these towers to structurally support the additional load of such facilities, will likely mean that, in many cases, existing FM radio station antennas and transmission line facilities will not be capable of being accommodated on towers that also support both NTSC and any DTV antennas and transmission line.

Already, numerous leases of space for FM station transmissions facilities atop television towers contain provisions that allow the lease to be terminated in the event that the television station(s) in question opt to install DTV transmission facilities. And Compass is aware of instances where protective cancellation notices have already been issued to the FM licensee. As a practical matter, it may not be possible for the transmitter site leases of FM stations to be renewed unless such a provision is agreed to by the licensees of the FM station in question. In any event, numerous existing FM transmitter site leases will be coming up for renewal, and it is likely that where the lease is for space atop a television transmission tower, such leases may not be renewed if the tower cannot structurally accommodate both FM transmission facilities and both the NTSC and DTV facilities of each television station on that tower.

B. Relocation Difficulties

Moreover, relocation of these facilities will not be easy irrespective of the strictures of Section 73.213. Other existing TV towers can be expected to suffer the same incapacity as the one from which a given FM station was evicted: lack of additional wind loading capacity, insufficient structural integrity and a lack of vertical mounting space for additional antennae. Thus, FM licensees finding their leases not renewed or canceled in order to make room for TV station DTV antennas on their present towers cannot reasonably expect to find “space at the inn” at any other site since all TV stations will be going digital and will require second antennas for their transitional digital channel. The task of finding such an alternate structure becomes even more difficult if not outright impossible when, due to the straightjacket of Section 73.213,

replacement towers must be located in virtually the same location. If this is not possible, the licensee must move to a more distant site and will have to emasculate its facility to prevent extension of the 1 mV/m contour toward short-spaced second- and third-adjacent channel stations.

Similarly, the erection of a new tower at the same or a nearby location is not a viable alternative. In recent years, the NIMBY principle (“not in my backyard”) has, with increasing robustness, infiltrated the land use regulatory strictures of many communities, making even the contemplation of tall tower erection something of a frivolous activity. Whereas the locations of many of today’s tall TV/FM towers were considered rural at the time of erection, today, urban sprawl has turned many of such sites into islands in the middle of suburbia. The tower is something that preexisted the arrival of the people and something which they have suffered without choice. But to propose another structure of similar dimensions in the same area is to invite a hailstorm of protest and likely failure. Moreover, in such areas, land availability has surely contracted and property values are likely to have arisen in meteoric fashion since the early days when tower foundation and guy anchors were put into the soil trodden by horses or tractors. Even aside from the regulatory approvals, the probability of finding vacant property at such locations is low because commercial and residential development have since arrived. Assembling the necessary amount of property at commercially reasonable prices is also unlikely because market values could have easily reached a six figure price per acre. These tower projects would be for the FM stations “refugees” from TV towers and, as a result, the price alone could

spell doom since FM station economies are admittedly less robust than those of their video brethren.

C. Reduction In Service/Revenues

All of these scenarios point to the virtual certainty of forced moves at considerable distance for many evicted grandfathered shortspaced FM broadcasters, if, indeed, they can find replacement sites at all. And such moves will very likely involve the need to reduce height, reduce power, directionalize and do whatever present rules require to prevent extension of their 1 mV/m contours in the direction of other short-spaced stations. This spells a wholesale reduction of service area and population covered. It means that existing service will be removed from many people who are accustomed to it. And all of this will happen merely to fit the regulatory template of 10-year old rules which were adopted in the absence of a significant, substantial and competent technical record demonstrating a reasonable basis to believe that interference would result from the continuation of the more flexible rules which had governed the location of grandfathered short-spaced FM stations for the previous 23 years.

D. Lender Pressures

What's worse, though, is that the forced relocation and likely downgrade of many grandfathered short-spaced stations does not end merely with the emasculation of their signals and forced reduction of service. A more universal impact will be felt industry-wide as reduced

service results in reduced income which, in turn, will automatically cause a corresponding reduction in station asset values overnight. And as asset values decline, so too will the collateral values of such stations for existing loans. The impact of this development on the industry cannot be underestimated. Customary bank credit facilities and loan documents are usually laden with affirmative and negative covenants of the part of the broadcaster to observe, such as maintenance of cash flow ratios and revenue minimums, continuation of important business contracts, maintenance of the business consistent with past practice, retention of certain key personnel, continued transmission at the existing transmitter site, continued holding of FCC licenses in good standing, and the like. Any time any of these covenants are breached, whether as a result of commission or omission of the borrower or merely as a result of circumstances in the marketplace, the loan can go into default, entitling the lender to call the loan.

The cessation of operation from licensed facilities, the relocation of the station to facilities providing significantly less coverage and the corresponding decline in revenue/cash flow are individually and collectively the kinds of circumstances that will likely trigger defaults of such loans. Since this phenomenon will not be restricted to one or two stations but to great numbers of grandfathered short-spaced stations forced to relocate, the fall-out could be widespread and have a not insubstantial impact on the radio broadcast industry generally. Liberalization of the rules as proposed in the NPRM so as to allow complete flexibility as to second- and third-adjacent channel situations will help avert such disasters-in-the-making.

III. The Comments of NAB

A. Diversity Threatened

NAB has failed to take these facts sufficiently into consideration as it proposed its half-measures to address the coming debacle. Moreover, the NAB's failure to endorse unrestricted flexibility for grandfathered broadcasters forced into such relocations will merely magnify the disadvantage already felt by such smaller-size broadcasters as a result of the overall consolidation of the radio industry. Smaller broadcasters, who provide some of the few remaining voices of diversity in increasingly consolidated radio markets and who are hard pressed to compete against super duopolies⁵, can ill-afford to weather significant asset value

⁵ A glimpse of what small local grandfathered facilities are competing against in terms of virtually unlimited radio ratings and revenue concentrations spawned by the new ownership rules and pursued by monopolies can be found in the lead story of last week's e-Mail newsletter published by Communications General Corporation, San Diego. Coincidentally, all of the stations mentioned are located in KXST's market:

"Jacor is acquiring KPOP(AM) and KGB-FM to bring its San Diego and vicinity holdings to 673,000 watts* of power with these eleven stations:

KOGO 600 kHz;

XETRA 690 kHz

KSDO 1130 kHz

KDBQ 1170 kHz

KPOP 1360 kHz

XETRA 91.1 MHz

KHTS 93.3 MHz

KGB 101.5 MHz

KKBH 102.9 MHz

KIOZ 105.3 MHz

KKLQ 106.5 MHz

*Combined ERP computed by adding the daytime AM TPOs to twice the FM ERPs (since circular polarization is used).

E-MAILXPERIMENT #68 Communications General Corporation,
(continued...)

declines at a single property as would be likely if the rule is not liberalized regarding second- and third-adjacent channel grandfathered stations. Such remaining diversity would indeed be threatened if these small grandfathered short-spaced broadcasters are not afforded the flexibility to try to preserve the viability of their station operations.

B. Unsupported Claims of Interference

The late-filed Comments of Eleven-Fifty Corporation apparently provided some of the basis for the NAB's proposal in its Reply Comments to qualify the circumstances under which grandfathered short-spaced stations could extend their contours in the direction of other such stations. The NAB's reliance is misplaced. Eleven-Fifty is the licensee of KIIS(FM), Los Angeles, which is licensed for operation with 8 kW ERP at nearly 3,000 feet HAAT from atop the Mt. Wilson antenna farm.⁶ It complains that listeners to KIIS who are driving on the Santa Monica Freeway experience "drop out" to reception at a point 23 miles from its transmitter site but two miles from the site of second-adjacent channel Station KJLH, Compton, California. Based on this, Eleven-Fifty states that power increases which would be afforded to second-and third-adjacent channel stations would cause "increased interference" and particularly so toward KIIS.

⁵ (...continued)

October 31, 1996.

⁶ The sale of KIIS to Jacor was recently announced in the trade press. Jacor is the same media conglomerate referred to in footnote 5 hereof.

Eleven-Fifty's comments fall far from the mark and certainly don't prove the points it is trying to make. At the outset, Eleven-Fifty's situation does not involve third-adjacent channel interference. Therefore, nothing Eleven-Fifty has said can be relied on by any party to support a finding that third-adjacent channel interference is an issue here. Quite to the contrary, neither Eleven-Fifty's unsupported comments about "interference" nor any record evidence brought forward in the NAB Reply Comments demonstrate any finding of third-adjacent channel interference. Furthermore, almost all commenting parties have stated that they favor the immediate and complete elimination of any third-adjacent channel spacing requirement for grandfathered short-spaced stations. In sum total, there are no data, evidence, or technical statements in the record here which justify keeping the present prohibition on contour extensions toward third-adjacent channel stations. The preponderance of the evidence supports its elimination. Indeed, while the NAB addresses second- and third-adjacent channel separations as a single issue in the context of their "receiver studies", the fact is that they present no data whatsoever as to the characteristics of these receivers with respect to third-adjacent channel reception. Thus, the reply comments are unsupported by record evidence as to third-adjacent channel interference. Overall, the entire record in this proceeding, and in fact, the evidence cited by the Commission itself in the NPRM (that since 1964, it has not received complaints regarding third-adjacent channel interference [see NPRM at ¶24]) points to the inescapable conclusion that third-adjacent channel interference is not a problem, and in the context of providing regulatory flexibility to grandfathered short-spaced stations, no regulation of such third-adjacent channel separations is necessary.

Eleven-Fifty's claim of second-adjacent channel interference to automobiles on the Santa Monica Freeway, addressed in the NAB proposal and Reply Comments, p. 12, is too ill-defined to be deserving of credit. First, the allegations of interference are not supported by references to dates, times, specific complaints, volume of complaints, locations, descriptions of the sounds heard, etc., such as to give substance to such claims. All that was submitted are unsubstantiated claims of interference by Eleven-Fifty's legal counsel so lacking in detail as to be incapable of being verified or analyzed for the relevance here. For example, Eleven-Fifty uses the terms "drop-outs" and "interference" to describe a phenomenon it claims to exist. These are undefined and unspecific terms. Discussions in this proceeding demand specificity since many different phenomena could be at play in the Eleven-Fifty example, some of which are outside the scope of this proceeding.

Some of the alleged interference may not be second-adjacent channel interference at all, but rather blanketing interference, a matter which is clearly outside the scope of this proceeding. Briefly, blanketing occurs when the front ends of the subject car radios may be momentarily overloaded with RF. The alleged interference could have been experienced regardless of the station selected. In such case, the particular frequency separation between the desired and undesired signal, whether second-adjacent or tenth-adjacent channel, is, for the most part, immaterial because the entire band pass of the receiver is affected. Physical proximity of the nearby transmitter to the receiver is the cause, and reducing such physical proximity is the solution. Giving KJLH the flexibility to select a different site might offer a remedy if blanketing exists. This opportunity should be supported by Eleven-Fifty, not opposed.

Such alleged interference may also have been Receiver-Induced Third Order Intermodulation Effect. (RITOIE). This is also a subject which is not within the scope of this proceeding. RITOIE occurs when two stations place considerable signal strength at a receiver's front end, causing the receiver to itself generate spurious signal which interferes with the reception of a third radio station. RITOIE is a possibility at the KJLH site. Another station, KACD(FM), Santa Monica, is collocated at the KJLH site. The combination of these stations and other transmitters known to be operating there could have been the proximate cause of the "interference" anecdotally referred to by Eleven-Fifty counsel. There is no way of knowing precisely, given the lack of technical information accompanying the claim. Here again, however, if it was indeed RITOIE interference, the recognized remedy would be to separate the two or more transmitters generating the signals resulting in RITOIE. By moving one of the contributing transmitters away from the site, the RITOIE would be eliminated. If such a contributing transmitter happened to be a grandfathered short-spaced station frozen at its present site by the existing Section 73.213 second and third-adjacent channel spacing requirements, the adoption of the changes proposed by the Commission in this docket would bring relief to the situation. Such changes are opposed by Eleven-Fifty.

The bottom line is that a proper identification and analysis of the interference must be offered before any probative value can be assigned to Eleven-Fifty's claim. Different types of effects warrant different, sometimes radically opposite, cures. Opposition to the Commission's proposed elimination of second- and third-adjacent channel spacings for grandfathered short-spaced stations cannot be factually supported by vague references to "drop outs" and

“interference” which are unsupported by technical data attested to by a qualified technical consultant.

C. Mobile Reception And Interference

Some additional observations might be helpful to better see how Eleven-Fifty’s opposition to relaxation of second- and third-adjacent channel separations is at odds with its stated interest in reducing interference and how the Reply Comments of the NAB, to the extent they urge restrictions on site changes to locations near major thoroughfares in reliance on Eleven-Fifty’s claims, are misguided. Motorists driving at the place on the unidentified segment of the Santa Monica Freeway where Eleven-Fifty alleges interference to occur are actually the outer edge of the contour of KIIS, which transmits from the distant Mt. Wilson antenna farm, and they are at the same time in the heart of the KJLH city-grade signal. These motorists are precisely at the place where problems, if they occur, may be expected. Indeed, as was pointed out in the Comments of Compass, the further apart grandfathered short-spaced stations are, the bigger the zone of potential interference. This is because the desired to undesired ratio is disadvantageous to the more distant station. The closer the stations get together, the stronger the desired signal is relative to the undesired one. At that point, the same proximity to the receiver of the undesired signal’s transmitter will not result in interruption of reception because the desired signal is strong enough to capture out the undesired one. The solution, therefore, is to allow such stations separated by two or three adjacent channels to get closer to each other, even to the extent of collocation. But the rules currently prevent this. Thus, by opposing the change

in Section 73.213, Eleven-Fifty ironically opposes what could be the best method of achieving its objective of reduced interference.

The prevention of interference to mobile receivers referred to in Eleven-Fifty's Comments and by the NAB in its Reply Comments, has never been the basis for spectrum allocations and interference regulation, nor should they be now. First, automobile radios are better at rejecting interference than most. The NAB Reply Comments support this conclusion. See Appendix II to NAB Reply Comments. Second, the Commission has recognized time and again both in enactment of Section 73.318 regarding blanketing interference and in its resolution of a variety of RITOIE cases that automobile reception is transitory in any given area. Automobiles will pass through an area of interference quickly and therefore, the Commission has correctly refused to hold licensees responsible for resolution of either blanketing or RITOIE interference to automobile radios. Automotive listeners move in and out of interference areas in relatively short periods of time and the Commission has held that it will not obligate broadcasters to "fix" tens of thousands of auto radios merely because they may momentarily pass through an interference area, nor will the Commission hold spectrum allocations, technical standards and broadcast facilities changes hostage to the vagaries of mobile reception interference, be it blanketing, multipath or spurious emissions. For this reason, mobile receivers are categorically excluded from the provisions of Section 73.318. So too should they be stricken from consideration here.